

ARS □ CSREES □ ERS □ NASS

Policies and Procedures

Title: Per Diem and Actual Subsistence Allowances

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Distribution: Headquarters, Areas, and Locations

This DIRECTIVE:

- States policy and describes types of travel expenses that per diem and actual subsistence allowances cover.
- Explains the maximum actual subsistence rates for domestic and foreign travel that may be approved when special or unusual circumstances occur.

Table of Contents

1.	REFERENCES	4
2.	ABBREVIATIONS	4
3.	DEFINITIONS	4
4.	AUTHORITIES	5
5.	POLICY	5
6.	RESPONSIBILITIES	5
	ARS Travel Coordinator, BFSB, FMD	5
	ABFO's	6
	Travelers	6
7.	TYPES OF EXPENSES COVERED BY PER DIEM	6
8.	EXCEPTIONS TO PER DIEM	7
9.	MAXIMUM PER DIEM RATES	7
	CONUS	7
	Nonforeign areas outside CONUS	7
	Foreign areas.	7
10.	PER DIEM ALLOWANCES	7
	TDY travel.	7
	Lodging required	7
	Lodging not required.	8
	Extended stays	8
	Dual per diem rates	8
	Recreational vehicles	8
	PCS	8
	En route travel to new PDS	8
	CONUS	8
	Outside CONUS	8
	Travel to seek residence quarters	8
	Temporary quarters allowance	9

CONUS	9
Outside CONUS	9
When lodgings/meals are furnished.	9
Lodgings furnished	9
Meals furnished.	9
CONUS locations.	9
Outside CONUS locations	9
Lodging and meals furnished	9
CONUS locations.	9
Outside CONUS locations	9
Preemployment interviews.	10
Reporting to first PDS	10
CONUS	10
Outside CONUS	10
11. MAXIMUM ACTUAL SUBSISTENCE RATES	10
CONUS	10
Travel outside CONUS	10

1. REFERENCES

For delegations of authority to approve travel and other related matters, see DIRECTIVE 340.0.

For information on tax exemption certificates, see the Federal Travel Directory.

For payment of travel expenses for preemployment interviews of candidates outside the Federal Service, see DIRECTIVE 454.3.

2. ABBREVIATIONS

- ABFO - Area Budget and Fiscal Officer
- AD - Area Director
- AM - Administrative Management
- ATR - Agriculture Travel Regulations
- BFSB - Budget and Fiscal Services Branch, FMD
- CONUS - Continental United States
- FMD - Financial Management Division
- FTD - Federal Travel Directory
- FTR - Federal Travel Regulations
- GSA - General Services Administration
- M&IE - Meals and Incidental Expenses
- NPS - National Program Staff
- OPM - Office of Personnel Management
- PCS - Permanent Change of Station
- PD - Personnel Division
- PDS - Permanent Duty Station
- SR - Standardized Regulations
- TDY - Temporary Duty
- U.S.C. - United States Code

3. DEFINITIONS

CONUS is the 48 contiguous United States and the District of Columbia.

Destination rate is the per diem rate applicable to the next location where the traveler will perform TDY or where the traveler makes an en route stopover to obtain overnight lodging.

Foreign areas are any areas (including the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands) situated both outside CONUS and the nonforeign areas.

Locality rates are maximum per diem rates prescribed for specific localities.

Nonforeign areas include the States of Alaska and Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

Per diem allowance is a daily amount authorized for lodging and M&IE instead of actual expenses.

Recreational vehicles include mobile homes, campers, camping trailers, or self-propelled mobile recreational vehicles.

Standard CONUS rate is a prescribed per diem rate for any location within CONUS that is not included in one of the defined localities or areas for which a specific rate is prescribed.

4. AUTHORITIES

- ATR 1-7, 1-8
- Comptroller General Decision B-189392
- FTR 301-7, 301-8, 302-1, 302-2, 302-4, 302-5
- 5 U.S.C. 5702
- 65 Comp. Gen. 143 (1985)
- SR (Government Civilians, Foreign Areas) 925

5. POLICY

It is USDA and ARS policy to reimburse travelers promptly, within the limits prescribed by the law, the ATR's, and the FTR's, for expenses necessarily incurred in carrying out their assigned work. When practicable, uniform per diem rates will be paid for like conditions of travel.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

The **ARS Travel Coordinator, BFSB, FMD**, is responsible for:

- Distributing changes in per diem rates for nonforeign areas outside the continental United States to ABFO's and Headquarters.
- Establishing actual subsistence rates when requested by more than one Area.
- Furnishing the applicable foreign per diem rates with the travel authorization to Headquarters employees.

ABFO's are responsible for:

- Furnishing the applicable foreign per diem rates with the travel authorization to Area/Location employees.
- Consolidating and forwarding requests for actual subsistence to FMD for approval.

Travelers are responsible for:

- Using current per diem rates as indicated by the provisions in section K.
- Forwarding questions on per diem and actual subsistence as follows:
 - Headquarters travelers contact the Travel Office, BFSB, FMD.
 - Area and Location travelers contact ABFO.
- Exercising the same care in incurring expenses as a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and personal funds.

7. TYPES OF EXPENSES COVERED BY PER DIEM

The per diem allowance covers all charges, including taxes and service charges, where applicable, for the following types of subsistence expenses:

- Lodging. (For information on tax exemption certificates, see the FTD.)
- Meals, including related tips and taxes.
- Incidental expenses.
 - Fees and tips to waiters, porters, baggage handlers, bellpersons, hotel

maids, dining room stewards and others on vessels, and hotel servants in foreign countries.

- Laundry and cleaning and pressing of clothing.

8. EXCEPTIONS TO PER DIEM

Per diem may not be paid for travel within one calendar day when the travel is performed within a 25-mile radius of either the employee's PDS or home.

Per diem may not be paid for travel of more than one calendar day when the travel is performed within a 35-mile radius of the employee's PDS.

Per diem shall not be allowed when the period of official travel is 10 hours or less.

9. MAXIMUM PER DIEM RATES

Per diem rates for official travel authorized or approved shall be at daily rates not in excess of the maximum per diem rates established. Per diem rates include a maximum amount for lodging expenses and a fixed allowance for M&IE, the total not to exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned. Maximum lodging amounts and the fixed M&IE allowances are separately identified in the following listings of per diem rates:

- **CONUS.** The per diem allowances payable for official travel shall not exceed the maximum per diem rates established by the Administrator, GSA, and listed in the FTD published monthly.
- **Nonforeign areas outside CONUS.** The per diem allowances payable for official travel shall not exceed the maximum per diem rates established by the Secretary of Defense and listed in Civilian Personnel Per Diem Bulletins published periodically in the Federal Register.
- **Foreign areas.** The per diem allowances payable for official travel shall not exceed the maximum per diem rates established by the Secretary of State and published in section 925, a per diem supplement to the SR's.

10. PER DIEM ALLOWANCES

TDY travel.

- **Lodging required.** The per diem rate allowable is the actual cost of lodging, limited to the maximum lodging amount for the location concerned, plus the applicable M&IE rate.
- **Lodging not required.** When no lodging costs are incurred, the per diem rate is limited to the applicable M&IE rate.

Extended stays.

- For travel assignments in excess of 30 days at TDY locations and travelers are able to secure lodging and meals at lower costs, the per diem rate will be reduced accordingly.
- **Dual per diem rates.** Employees receiving per diem at one TDY location are authorized to receive an additional per diem allowance for official TDY at another location. The amount of additional per diem will be limited to the increased expenses resulting from the temporary duty assignments not to exceed the maximum locality rate. The excess amount (if any) of the lodging cost may be reimbursed as a miscellaneous travel expense if otherwise proper.

NOTE: Dual per diem rates will not be allowed unless employees are occupying long-term residence accommodations.

Recreational vehicles.

Employees may be authorized a per diem allowance while on TDY, limited to the applicable maximum rate for the location concerned when the use of recreational vehicles is authorized or approved as advantageous to the Government. Advantageous use might occur when on an extended TDY assignment in a remote area or where conventional lodging facilities are limited or not available.

PCS.

- **En route travel to new PDS.**
 - **CONUS.** The standard CONUS rate is prescribed for all locations within CONUS.

- **Outside CONUS.** The per diem allowance payable shall be the locality rate concerned.
- **Travel to seek residence quarters.** The standard CONUS rate is prescribed for all locations within CONUS.
- **Temporary quarters allowance.**
 - **CONUS.** The standard CONUS rate is prescribed for all locations within CONUS.
 - **Outside CONUS.** When temporary quarters are obtained in a foreign area or in the United States prior to transferring to a foreign area, the employee may be eligible for an allowance under the SR prescribed by the Department of State.

When lodgings/meals are furnished.

- **Lodgings furnished.** When lodging is furnished at no cost to the traveler, the maximum per diem rate is reduced to the M&IE rate.
- **Meals furnished.**
 - **CONUS locations.** When meals are furnished at no cost to the traveler, the following deductions must be made to the M&IE rate:

	M&IE	Rates
	\$ 26	\$ 34
Breakfast	\$ 5	\$ 7
Lunch	5	7
Dinner	14	18
Incidentals	2	2

- **Outside CONUS locations.** When meals are furnished at no cost to the traveler, the M&IE rate shall be reduced by the applicable dollar amount shown in appendix B of section 301-7, FTR.

- **Lodging and meals furnished.**
 - **CONUS locations.** When there is no charge to the employee for lodging and meals, the per diem rate is \$2 per day. For certain training programs conducted in residence facilities (i.e., Federal Executive Institute), OPM has determined the rate is fixed at \$5 per day. For further information, contact PD.
 - **Outside CONUS locations.** When there is no charge to the employee for lodging and meals, the per diem rate shall be reduced by the applicable dollar amount shown in appendix B of section 301-7, FTR.

Preemployment interviews.

If ARS deems necessary, the per diem rate allowable is the actual cost of lodging, limited to the maximum lodging amount for the location concerned, plus the applicable M&IE rate. Payment of per diem is discretionary, not an entitlement (see DIRECTIVE 454.3).

Reporting to first PDS.

- **CONUS.** New appointees are eligible for the standard CONUS rate which is prescribed for all locations within CONUS when reporting to first PDS is involved.
- **Outside CONUS.** New appointees are eligible for the per diem applicable to the location concerned.

11. MAXIMUM ACTUAL SUBSISTENCE RATES

Actual subsistence rates for official travel may be authorized or approved when, due to special or unusual circumstances, the lodging costs absorb all or nearly all of the applicable maximum per diem rate. Actual subsistence will not be authorized unless expenses exceed the locality per diem rate by at least \$5 total for the duration of the period requested. However, the following restrictions apply:

- **CONUS.** The maximum daily rate for subsistence expenses shall not exceed 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem rate (rounded to the next dollar) prescribed in section J for the TDY location.

- **Travel outside CONUS.** The maximum daily rate for subsistence expenses shall not exceed the greater of the amounts prescribed in section J for nonforeign and foreign areas:
 - 150 percent of the applicable maximum per diem rate or
 - \$50 plus the applicable maximum per diem rate.

Approval of actual subsistence rates should be requested by the traveler through the Area Travel Clerk before the travel period begins. However, use of actual subsistence may be post approved sparingly.

If employees from more than one Area and/or Headquarters staff will be traveling to a location requiring approval of an actual subsistence rate, the requests must be forwarded through the Area Travel Clerk (or BFSB, FMD, for Headquarters) to the Director, FMD, for approval on behalf of the Administrator. Otherwise, the AD's (Deputy Administrators for NPS and AM, as applicable) may approve actual subsistence rates when only their respective employees are involved (see DIRECTIVE 340.0).

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